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Books that have become classics – books that have had their day and now get more praise than perusal – always remind me of retired colonels and majors and captains who, having reached the age limit, find themselves retired on half-pay.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich
1836-1907

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The Asylum

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For more information, please contact the editor.

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President's Message

by Pete Smith

Your Numismatic Bibliomania Society Board of Trustees has been discussing the issue of honorary life membership. Currently, the NBS Constitution allows for election to honorary life membership by a vote at our annual meeting. Sadly, there are three problems with this procedure:

1. Our annual meeting typically attracts less than 10% of our members. Consequently, a vote may not represent the viewpoint of our broader membership.

2. The solution of requiring a vote from the general membership will obviously alert a candidate that he/she is being considered for the honor.

3. Even worse, if the candidate were to fail to receive the required number of votes, he/she would suffer the public humiliation of being rejected for honorary life membership.

We are proposing that the constitution be amended to allow granting of honorary life membership by action of the Board of Trustees. If you are interested in checking out our constitution, it was published in *The Asylum* in 1998 (vol.16/3). It is also available on our website – www.coinbooks.org.

In 1989 the NBS gave an hon-

orary life membership to Frank Katen. With his death, there are no current honorary life members.

The proposed amendment to the constitution is as follows:

To delete from Article II, Section 3, this sentence:

Election to honorary life membership, upon recommendation of the Board of Trustees and written notification to the membership at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting, shall be held by ballot of the eligible voting members at the annual meeting of the society.

And in its place this sentence:

Honorary life membership may be awarded with the approval of two-thirds of the Board of Trustees.

The current NBS Board supports this proposal. A ballot is included with this issue.

Also in this issue is the ballot for our annual NBS Writer's Award. Since 1998, the Society has presented awards in first, second and third place for the best articles in our journal. The awards will be presented during our membership meeting at the ANA convention in New York.

Secretary/Treasurer's Message

by David Sklow

Let me take this opportunity to extend my thanks to the members who have made the NBS what it is today! We are once again growing and expanding our membership base. We now have 347 members.

It takes the work and cooperation of all to make the NBS a success. I am asking all members to please try to submit your dues payment at the beginning of the calendar year; this way, the Society can run more smoothly and follow a budget. I would also like to ask all members to consider writing for *The Asylum*. We are in great need of articles and book reviews for the upcoming issues!

With the ANA convention in New York just around the corner, I would like to ask for donations for our annual fund raising auction. Please contact me or any Board member concerning a donation.

I would also like to make the membership aware that the NBS does indeed have a membership category for life membership. The constitution and bylaws state that life membership is available at the rate of twenty times the normal yearly membership, which would put the current rate at \$300 based on our

\$15 annual dues. Please contact me if you are interested in becoming a life member.

It is very important that all members keep the Secretary/Treasurer informed of any changes in their mailing or email addresses. Please send notice of address changes as soon as they occur. Having the wrong address delays delivery of *The Asylum* and costs the Society more for postage. I would like to remind all members that the NBS has a large list of available back issues of *The Asylum*. These issues can be purchased for \$5 per issue, post paid. The list of available issues appears on a separate page of the journal. There is only one official mailing address for the NBS: NBS Secretary/Treasurer, P.O. Box 76192, Ocala, FL 34481. Please send all requests to this address.

In case any of the members were unaware, there is a category for numismatic literature exhibits at the annual ANA convention. It is class #22 and entrants compete for the Aaron Feldman Memorial Award. We need members to exhibit in this class!

I hope to see everyone in New York at our annual meeting and symposium.

Plagiarism or Cooperation?: Two Identical Premium-Paid Lists of the Late Nineteenth Century

by David F. Fanning*

I recently came into possession of a late nineteenth-century premium-paid (or prices-paid-for) list by the firm, unknown to me at the time, of the Bogert and Durbin Company of New York and Philadelphia. The specifications of the list are as follows:

The Coin and Stamp Premium List. Being One of the Few Lists Issued by Reliable Coin Dealers. Prices Paid for All Desirable American Coins, Stamps and Paper Money, by the Bogert & Durbin Co. Printed by the Broadway Printing Company, 56 E. 10th Street, New York. 24 pages, card covers. 8.5 by 5.5 inches. Undated, but probably between 1892 and 1895.

I purchased the list off a popular online auction site. I remember that as the photo slowly loaded onto my computer screen, I thought that the person selling it had made a mistake in cataloguing it as a Bogert and Durbin list because I instantly recognized the list's lengthy title as being identical to one used by the New York Coin and Stamp Company. However, as the photo of the list's front cover

finally emerged at the bottom of my screen, I found that the seller was correct – the list did seem to be a publication of Bogert and Durbin.

I enjoy collecting the kind of stuff which even most NBS-types would regard as being little more than curious junk with almost no research value. That being the case, I placed a bid on the list and was pleased to find a couple days later that I had won the lot. What follows is a chronological account of how I went about trying to determine the answer to some questions raised by this premium-paid list.

Between my winning the lot and receiving it in the mail, I did two things. First, I located my copy of the New York Coin and Stamp Company premium-paid list whose title I had recognized as being identical to the Bogert and Durbin list I had just won. Sure enough, I wasn't misremembering – the titles were identical. Strange. Then, I tried to find out who this Bogert and Durbin were. I looked first to see if the premium-paid list was mentioned in Remy Bourne's

*The author would like to thank Joel Orosz for his contributions to this article, in particular for his allowing me to quote private email correspondence between us. I also wish to acknowledge the help given me by Maria Manko regarding the history of printing technology. However, any errors of fact or interpretation in this work are entirely my own.

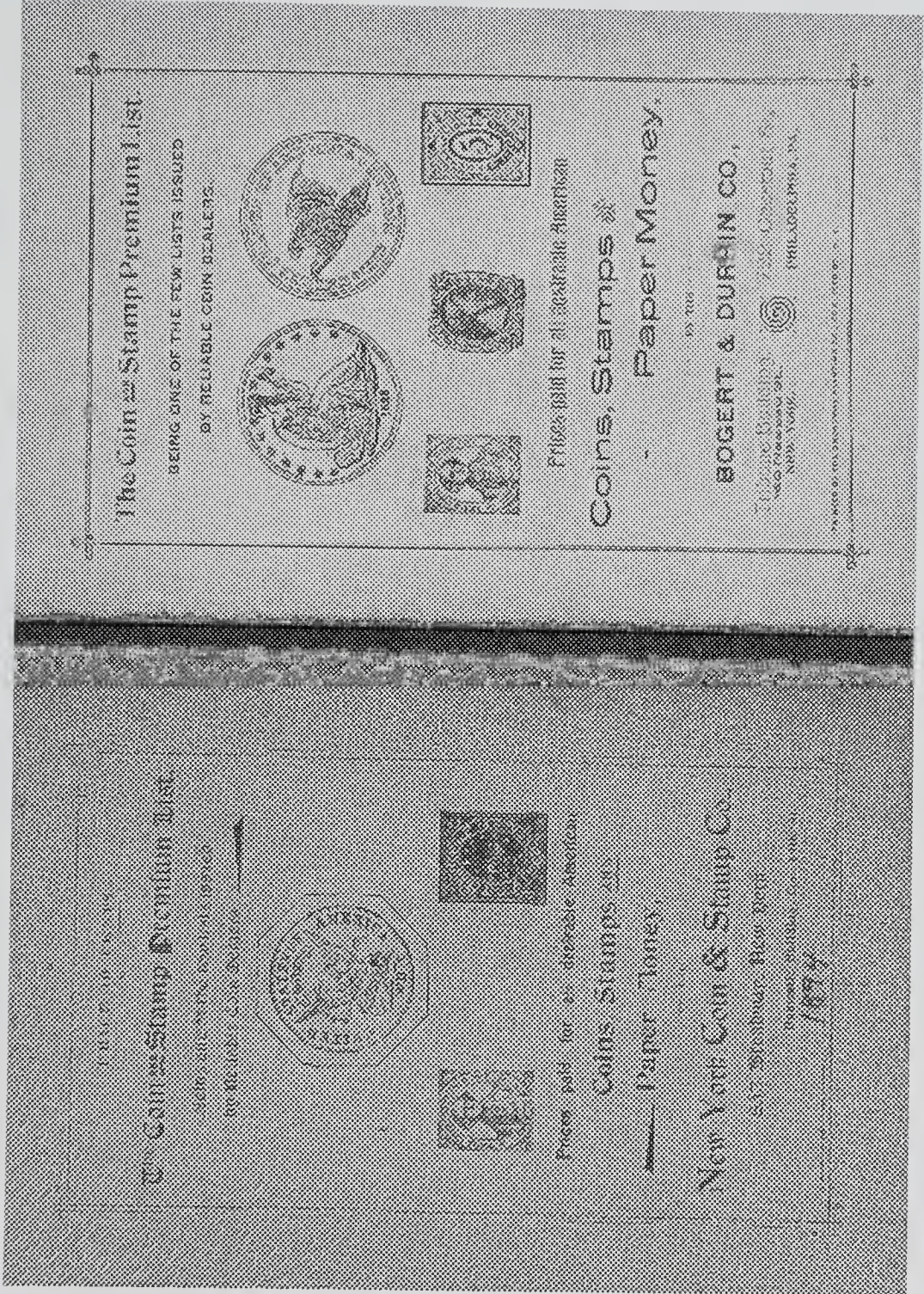


Figure 1 — The premium-paid list published by the New York Coin and Stamp Company (left) with the list published by the Bogert and Durbin Company (right).

book on the subject for the nineteenth century.¹ The firm was unmentioned. I then checked Gengerke to see if he had listed the firm as having conducted auctions.² No luck there, either.

When the package arrived, I sat down to take a close look at both the newly-arrived list and the New York Coin and Stamp Company list [Figure 1]. I wanted to see if they shared more similarities than their somewhat awkward title.

They were essentially identical. Page by page, item by item, they matched up in nearly every way. Though both lists are 24 pages in length, the only substantial differences are as follows:

1. The use of running heads by the New York Coin and Stamp Company and the insertion of their name in a couple other places throughout the list. These are not present throughout the Bogert and Durbin list. Bogert and Durbin's name does not appear anywhere except once on the front cover of their list.

2. The art on the cover. The art selections on the front covers of the two lists are different, though each selection is taken from the line art illustrations throughout both texts.

3. The list by the New York Coin and Stamp Company is priced at ten cents on the cover, whereas no price appears on the Bogert and Durbin version.

The fact that the lists seemed

to be identical puzzled me, but I recalled reading somewhere that occasionally numismatic firms of the time period would share or simply steal each other's lists. Surely the publisher of these two specimens must be the same.

Nope. They weren't even in the same state. In contrast to the bibliographic entry for the Bogert and Durbin list given at the beginning of this article, the entry for the New York Coin and Stamp Company list runs as follows:

The Coin and Stamp Premium List. Being One of the Few Lists Issued by Reliable Coin Dealers. Prices Paid for All Desirable American Coins, Stamps and Paper Money, by the New York Coin & Stamp Co. Printed by the Meriden Gravure Company of Meriden, Connecticut. 24 pages, card covers. 8.5 by 5.5 inches. Undated, but hand-dated 1894 on the cover, a date which seems reasonable to me due to the large amount of Columbus material advertised in the list and on the covers.

Time to call in the experts. I put out a message on the *E-Sylum*, the weekly email bulletin of the NBS and quite probably the single best way to simultaneously reach any number of experts on numismatic literature. In the weeks that followed, I had only one correspondent on the subject – Joel Orosz, who had never heard of the firm,

¹ R. Bourne, *Fixed Price List (sic) and Prices Paid For List's (sic) of United States Coin Dealers, 1822-1900*, (Minneapolis, 1988).

² M. Gengerke, *American Numismatic Auctions*, 8th ed., (Woodside, 1990).

either.³ If you don't know Joel, there's very little he hasn't heard of, particularly in the area of numismatic literature. He likes a good mystery, though, and this one had him stumped.

The possible scenarios we came up with over the next couple weeks were as follows:

Scenario 1. That the Bogert and Durbin list was a fraud, illegitimately copied from a well-established company's list. As Joel put it: "I wonder if it was a scam – since the chances of two dealers issuing an identical prices paid for list at the same time seems highly unlikely. Bogert & Durbin could have copied a legit list and bilked a few folks who sent them coins."

Evidence in favor of this interpretation: that the lists are nearly identical; the removal of the New York Coin and Stamp Company's name; the fact that the firm of Bogert and Durbin is unknown today; that Bogert and Durbin used a different printer than the New York Coin and Stamp Company.⁴

Evidence against: in Joel's words, "the fact that the hobby back then was much smaller and less lucrative than it is today"; the unlikelihood of finding a

printer willing to spend the time reproducing a 24-page list word for word; that Bogert and Durbin list addresses at 160 Nassau Street in New York and 722 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia and having two offices in major cities seems unlikely if this was just a scam.

Verdict: possible, but unlikely.

Scenario 2. That Bogert and Durbin were a successor firm to the New York Coin and Stamp Company.

Evidence for: that the lists are nearly identical except for the removal of the New York Coin and Stamp Company's name (a successor firm would presumably continue to use much of the predecessor firm's property, including templates for publications — removing the old name would not be especially difficult and would be necessary as well).

Evidence against: the New York Coin and Stamp Company was around until at least 1908 and this list is almost certainly from the 1890s; the prices, one would expect, would also be different if this were a later production and the list would include later dates; the successor firm would almost certainly insert their name into the pages where

³ Neither the firm nor its principals are listed in R. W. Mercer, *The Numismatic Directory for 1884*, (Cincinnati, 1884). In the *Coin Collector's Magazine*, Vol. I, No. 5 (October 1884), E. L. Mason highlights a Leon W. Durbin in his "Eminent Numismatists, Past and Present" series: this may or may not be the Durbin of Bogert and Durbin. By 1884, however, Leon Durbin was primarily a stamp dealer, not a coin dealer.

⁴ It seems safe to dismiss the notion that the New York Coin and Stamp Company stole the list from Bogert and Durbin, as the former were a well-established firm by this point and were fully capable of producing their own lists. Plus, as I attest later in this piece, the list was almost certainly written by the New York Coin and Stamp Company's David Proskey.

the predecessor firm's name had been; if there was a successor firm, this would very likely be known to some of the NBS people.

Verdict: Joel and I decided that Bogert and Durbin were almost certainly not a successor firm to the New York Coin and Stamp Company.

Scenario 3. That Bogert and Durbin were a subsidiary firm of New York Coin and Stamp or were affiliated with them in some other way that would make their publishing the same list legitimate.

Evidence for: that the lists are nearly identical, suggesting cooperation between business partners.

Evidence against: as Joel pointed out in an email, "it seems a bit early to have done that"; one would think the smaller, less prestigious firm would make mention of the fact that they were allied with a larger, well-known company; it seems strange that Bogert and Durbin is all but forgotten today if they were an affiliate of the New York Coin and Stamp Company, which is still well known.

Verdict: possible, but unlikely.

Closer examination of the lists deepened the mystery. Not only did I find the lists essentially identical when examining the major elements of the text, but, by paying attention to irregularities in type formation, it became clear to me that these lists were printed from the same plates. Not only are the prices and listings identical, along with the art throughout, but so are the ran-

dom blobs of ink and misshapen letters that result from the less than careful production of printing plates [Figures 2 and 3].

Bogert and Durbin, then, would have needed access to the exact physical plates used by the New York Coin and Stamp Company for their printing, or so it would appear. This implies some measure of cooperation between the firms, advancing the cause of Scenario 3 above.

That the same printing plates were used raises the possibility of there being some measure of cooperation between the printing firms: the Meriden Gravure Company of Meriden, Connecticut (used by the New York Coin and Stamp Company) and the Broadway Printing Company of New York city (used by Bogert and Durbin). Thus, I developed a fourth and fifth scenario.

Scenario 4. That the printing firms involved cooperated and used plates originally commissioned by the New York Coin and Stamp Company as generic templates for others to use.

Evidence for: the plates obviously somehow got from the one printer to the other; plates would have little value once used for their original purpose unless, with some very simple modifications, they could be used to fill an order from an additional customer (who might not have to pay as much, as the plates wouldn't have to be made from scratch — hence, a small firm might be able to afford to produce a premium-paid list that would otherwise be prohibitively expensive).

I799	Five stars on right.	\$2.00 to \$2.50
I799	.....	1.25 to 1.50
I800	.....	1.25 to 2.00
I801	.....	1.50 to 2.50
I802	.....	1.50 to 2.00
I803	.....	1.50 to 2.25

Figure 2 — Close-up of part of the text from the New York Coin and Stamp Company list. Note the botched dollar sign in the first line.

I799	Five stars on right.	\$2.00 to \$2.50
I799	.....	1.25 to 1.50
I800	.....	1.25 to 2.00
I801	.....	1.50 to 2.50
I802	.....	1.50 to 2.00
I803	.....	1.50 to 2.25

Figure 3 — Close-up from the Bogert and Durbin list of the same material shown in Figure 2. Note that the botched dollar sign in the first row is present, confirming that these lists were printed from identical plates.

Evidence against: not much, except that this seems a little far-fetched.

Verdict: entirely possible. Perhaps to avoid the embarrassment of having their duplicated list circulate in New York along with the New York Coin and Stamp Company's original list, the Bogert and Durbin list only circulated out of their Philadelphia office.

Scenario 5. That the printing firms involved cooperated and offered customers generic plates for such an item, which could be individualized by the addition of a firm's names, and that the New York Coin and Stamp Company and Bogert and Durbin both took advantage of this.

Evidence for: none, but theoretically possible.

Evidence against: it seems highly unlikely that the New York Coin and Stamp Company would have to rely upon a generic template to produce their premium-paid lists. The coin market was so much smaller than it is today, the notion that printers would have a generic premium-paid template (that would have to be updated every now and then) they could offer to customers is most improbable. Also, there are indications throughout the list (such as the commentary that there are no known original 1804 dollars and that any dollars of that date are restrikes) which bear the mark of having been written by New York Coin and Stamp Company manager David Proskey (whose name appears on the inside front cover of their list).

Verdict: almost certainly not the case. The list was almost positively written by Proskey.

By this point, I had determined that the most likely scenarios were numbers two and four, with the latter being more credible. However, while discussing this article with my fiancée, Maria Manko, she suggested that Bogert and Durbin may have been able to have new plates made through a photographic technique requiring nothing but access to a paper copy of the New York Coin and Stamp Company list. They would have had to cover up or obliterate anything on the plates they didn't want to include (such as the running heads), but that would be easy to accomplish.

With this in mind, I decided to see if I could find any trace of the New York Coin and Stamp Company running heads on the Bogert and Durbin list. I figured that if they had obliterated or otherwise tried to remove the heads, some evidence may remain of their having done so.

And sure enough, that's the case. Each page of the New York Coin and Stamp Company list has the following running head along with the page number: New York Coin and Stamp Co., 853 Broadway, New York.

A close examination of the Bogert and Durbin list showed the remnants of the lower-case p in "Stamp" on page 11 and the full comma following "Broadway" on page 20 [see Figures 4 and 5]. There is no mistaking these remnants as anything else

New York Coin and Stamp Co., 853 Broadway, New York. 11

11

Figure 4 — (above) the original running head published in the New York Coin and Stamp Company list; (below) the remnant of a lower-case *p* shows through on the Bogert and Durbin list, where it was incompletely obliterated during production of the printing plates.

– they are as clear as could be. They align perfectly with the location of the running head in the New York Coin and Stamp Company list. This is direct evidence that Bogert and Durbin did, without a doubt, use the New York Coin and Stamp Company list and try to remove all reference to the original publisher and pass it as their own.

This changes things. Some of the scenarios listed above remain valid. The primary questions to be asked have shifted somewhat, however:

1. Did they have permission to reproduce the list? It seems likely that, if Bogert and Durbin had offices in New York City and if this list was going to be circulated there, the New York Coin and Stamp Company would soon enough find out about it if they did not authorize its use. Did Bogert and Durbin only circulate this in Philadelphia, the other city in which they seem to have had offices? If so, the New York Coin and Stamp Company would find out about it soon enough, having plenty of customers there. (The person from whom I purchased the list is in Nebraska, so no clues there.)

2. How did the Bogert and Durbin Company reproduce the list? Did they have access to the metal plates (which would imply cooperation on either the part of the New York Coin and Stamp Company or the printers) or did they have new plates made through a photographic technique (which they could do surreptitiously)?

This boils down quickly to the

following scenarios:

Scenario A: The Bogert and Durbin Company had the permission of the New York Coin and Stamp Company to reproduce the list. If so, then Scenario 3, listed above, would appear to be the correct answer to this puzzle. The method of reproduction becomes irrelevant. However, I find this situation to be unlikely for the reasons given in Scenario 3.

Scenario B: The Bogert and Durbin Company did not have permission to reproduce the list and did so surreptitiously and possibly as part of a scam. They did, however, have access to the metal plates used to print the New York Coin and Stamp Company list, and so the printer was likely involved in the scam to some degree. This combines Scenario 1 and Scenario 4. I feel that the more people involved, the less likely a scenario is, and so I feel hesitant to give this one much credence.

Scenario C: The Bogert and Durbin Company did not have permission to reproduce the list and did so surreptitiously and possibly as part of a scam. They did not have access to the metal plates used to print the New York Coin and Stamp Company list, and had to find a printer willing to reproduce the plates photographically. If the business ethics of the printer are reflected in the quality of the printer's work, this seems to fit the bill. This combines Scenario 1 with the new evidence introduced by the remnants of the running heads and the information given

20 New York Coin and Stamp Co., 883 Broadway, New York.

20

Figure 5 — (above) the original running heads published in the New York Coin and Stamp Company list; (below) a comma remains where the running head was incompletely obliterated for the production of the Bogert and Durbin list; note the skewed page number, crudely corrected after having been accidentally eradicated.

to me by Maria regarding printing technology.

Unfortunately, I have no definite solution to this mystery. I very much suspect that Scenario C (the modified Scenario 1) is the correct answer to the puzzle posed by this bit of numismatic ephemera, but I can't prove this beyond the shadow of a doubt. If it was part of a scam, it is likely that it was printed in the hopes that some people would send in coins quickly enough that they could (quite literally) take the money and run before New York

Coin and Stamp realized what they were up to.

In the course of studying this list, I've changed my mind several times regarding it and its status. Hopefully, the recounting of my efforts to shed light on the list are interesting for methodological reasons if for no other. If any NBS member has some information to add that could help clear up the questions raised here, please contact me at the mailing address or email address given on the first page of this journal.

New Members

Raymond Flanigan, Leland,
North Carolina

Jeffrey Gresser, Las Vegas,
Nevada

Alan Herbert, Belle Fourche,
South Dakota

Robert Heisley, Cleveland, Ohio
(Life Member)

Amanda Rondot, Ft. Wayne,
Indiana

Alan Roy, Toronto, Ontario,
Canada

Bob Schreiner, Chapel Hill,
North Carolina

David Wnuck, Wallingford,
Connecticut

Some Notes on Archives

by Q. David Bowers

Getting Rid of "Stuff"

"Like barbarians sacking Rome, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is willfully destroying much of its historical files, which date back to 1790 and are a fabulous 'paper trail' of the extraordinary inventiveness and innovation of Americans. The agency says it is scanning and digitizing this treasure trove, so there is no need to keep the documents. Anything the office considers to be 'historic papers' is being preserved or turned over to the National Archives. By that criterion they would presumably save the Constitution and, say, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, but would incinerate millions of other documents." This item, in *Forbes* magazine, went on to say that, fortunately, at least some of the stuff has been saved by "one appalled individual, Randy Rabin, [who] has been going through Patent Office trash bins and [has] retrieved countless documents, including some bearing the name of T.A. Edison."

In the meantime, for many years various university, town, city, and state libraries have been discarding original copies of magazines, newspapers, and other items, sometimes micro-filming them and sometimes not. Usually, these papers are thrown in the trash bin (as the Library of Congress has done) or are sold in bulk to dealers.

The problem with this is that microfilm images can be and often are out of focus, or too dark, or have other problems. Also, microfilm is the state of the art circa the late 1930s, and, as in many instances the originals have been lost, there is no way that a good copy can be made today from a fuzzy, poorly shot microfilm. Also, as many readers know, nearly all images prior to the 1870s are line engravings, not halftones. These line engravings, with a wealth of detail, do not and never did copy well onto film. Today, there are some high-resolution, digital-imaging scanners that can do a decent job of copying engravings, if originals can be found.

What to Do?

Having spent more than a little time in the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, the American Numismatic Society library and a few dozen other such repositories, I have gained what I believe are some insights.

First, most general libraries run by local, state, or the national government simply store old newspapers, files, etc. Relatively few have loving curators who really appreciate what they have. More often than not, especially with large city and government repositories, many of the employees are simply working there because it is a job – nothing more, nothing less. Accord-

ingly, it is a false dream to expect that such employees will cherish the treasures on their shelves.

In contrast, a library specifically set up to care for items of importance, and with knowledgeable curators (the American Numismatic Association, American Numismatic Society, Beinecke, American Antiquarian Society, Bancroft, Widener, Huntington, and certain other libraries are examples), do appreciate what they have.

Recommendation: town, state, and government libraries with valuable treasures should turn them over to specialized libraries as above.

In any and all events, as budgets permit (a key consideration, I realize), libraries should digitally scan in high resolution as many of their treasures as possible, and then place the treasures in a safe, dry place, so that if a generation from now an improved copying system is devised, the originals will still be there.

Such digital scans also have the advantage that they can be easily copied, transmitted over the Internet, and in some instances, actually translated into digital words for analysis.

Library Users

Unfortunately, the users of libraries are often a part of the problem. All one has to do is read through a handful of issues of the *Manuscript Society Newsletter* to find multiple instances in which trusted researchers and scholars and even longtime curators, have

filched valuable things. This is a common occurrence. Digitizing the originals can help with this, but probably never can prevent curator theft.

Moreover, in large city libraries, users often damage original copies. About 20 years ago, my wife Christie went to the New York Public Library to do research on Robert Robinson, a prominent illustrator in the early twentieth century, who did many covers for *The Saturday Evening Post* and other popular magazines. She found that the NYPL's collection of original copies of this particular magazine had been largely devastated by having the Norman Rockwell covers scissored and razored out (but most Robinson covers were still intact, as Robinson was not a well known name).

Also, in many if not most large city libraries, if you fill out call slips for, say, 20 to 40 different items, a handful will be reported as simply "missing." Perhaps they have been missing for years. Who knows?

As if the foregoing were not enough to consider, beginning in a large way in the 1880s, and continuing for a long time afterward, most paper used for periodicals had high sulfur content. In time, residual sulfur made the pages brittle. Thus, magazines, directories, and books of the 1880s through about 1910 in particular, even if handled carefully, will break and chip. I recall that around 1975, I spent a few days at the New York Historical Society looking through directories. On the shelf of city directo-

ries for the 1880s and 1890s were hundreds of little yellowed chips and particles that had fallen from these volumes. Ironically, early newspapers and books were often made of very high quality rag-content paper, with the result that a copy of the *San Francisco Herald* from 1854 is strong and durable today and can be handled without fear of damaging it.

Short Takes

Today, a private library gathered by a careful, loving collector is often a great repository for old newspapers and books. Without a doubt, such gentlemen as Harry W. Bass, Jr., Dan Hamelberg, John W. Adams, Armand Champa, and others have aided in the preservation of such treasures by carefully storing them and, in some instances, incorporating them into high quality protective bindings.

When I was a student at the Pennsylvania State University, I sought to take out a particular historical volume, but was told that it was an “overnight” book only. As it had hundreds of pages, there was no way that I could digest it in one evening. I looked at the slip pasted in the book, and found that it had last been checked out in 1879! So much for it being so popular that it could not be loaned out for at least a few days! I thought this was hilarious.

Recently at the New Hampshire State Library in Concord (which is a marvelous archive, well kept) my secretary, Carol Travers, and I had occasion to spend a few days digging into

state banking, legislative, and financial records. Interestingly, certain journals of the New Hampshire House of Representatives from the 1840s had been stored by this library and its predecessors for over a century and a half, and we were the first people to look at certain pages (as they were not cut apart yet at the edges)! The librarian was familiar with such situations, and allowed us to cut them carefully.

In another instance, I knew that early in the nineteenth century there was a legislative investigation of the New Hampshire Bank in Portsmouth. When we delved into the original records filed by banks, beginning in 1814, all of the New Hampshire Bank reports were in a little pile by themselves – apparently having been segregated about 180 years ago during the investigation, and left that way ever since.

As a class, research librarians are among the nicest people I know. They are eager to help with searches, and they enjoy it when someone appreciates their archives.

For a number of summers I’ve spent a week each year “living” in the American Numismatic Association library in Colorado Springs, and each time I might have well have been on vacation – a warm and fuzzy experience.

To own books is to love them. Just about any numismatist I know is very proud of his or her library, especially if it contains items that are interesting and seldom encountered.

A Misnomer Mystery Finally Solved by David Cassel

This work is intended as a follow up to a subject which I briefly addressed in my *United States Pattern Postage Currency Coins*, which was published in 2000. The following material is an update of one of the most puzzling aspects of my earlier research, the "Koulz's Alloy" ten cent pattern coins of 1869 (Judd 716/Pollock.795), which were struck in an alloy of silver, nickel, and copper.

From a technical standpoint, I will make no changes to what is presented in Chapter 9 of my monograph, which deals with the postage currency related pattern dimes of 1869. My continuing research in this area involved not only the coins, but more so, the man...or, better, the misnomer. But first, let me lay the groundwork by restating a portion of Chapter 9, which dealt with the "Koulz's Alloy" pattern coins. For the following passage will set up my update.

A supposed German chemist, Koulz was the inspiration for both the first reverse design, "SIL.9" over "NIC.1" above a line which is over the date "1869" and second reverse design elements, "SIL." over "NIC." over "COP." above a line which is over the slightly curved date "1869." An effort to garner some additional information on Koulz proved fruitless. Regrettably, this cataloguer, with the

help of numismatists in Germany and the United States using the facilities of libraries, encyclopedias and the Internet, could come up with not a single reference to Koulz, not even his first name, except that in the 600 page German lexicon, Koulz may not be a German name.

What little we know originated in a booklet entitled *Suggestions to Congress of the Finances of the United States* submitted to the Chamber of Commerce of New York, by H.E. Moring in 1869. This is where, more or less, from the earliest pattern book reference to Koulz found in the Adams and Woodin *United States Pattern, Trial, and Experimental Pieces*, published in 1913 and reprinted in 1959, Dr. Judd, Andrew Pollock and now this cataloger essentially restate what, according to Andrew Pollock III, in *United States Patterns and Related Issues* was offered:

In 1869 the Mint experimented with an alloy consisting of 41% copper, 33% nickel, and 26% silver. The alloy was invented by the German chemist, Koulz, and promoted by a New York chemist [and Metallurgist, Stefan] Krackowizer. Dr. Judd in his pattern book quotes the commentary of W.E. DuBois who describes the alloy as follows: 'Mr. Eckfeldt made a small bar, and

gave it three meltings. It rolled down with great difficulty, splitting and cracking in spite of all the precaution and annealings. Mr. Barber made a reverse to try it under the press (using the dime head for the obverse,) and a faint impression was produced in the steam press. The metal is totally unfit for coinage, and the color is bad.' Director Pollock considered the 'Koulz's alloy' coinage at some length in his Annual Report of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1869.... 'Under the coining press it was barely possible to produce a feeble impression, on account of the intense hardness, and danger both of breaking the dies and flawing the planchet. In short, nothing could be more unfit for coinage.'

With the obverse designed in 1836 by Christian Gobrecht and redesigned in 1859 by James B. Longacre, dimes were created with the dateless Seated Liberty obverse die created during the transition period of 1859-1860. Note the broken serif of the first S in "STATES." William Barber designed the reverse in 1869. Another interesting mule was created. Once again, a coin having a common die element with the Postage Currency coins was created. 1869 would be the year that the dateless obverse element of the Seated Liberty Postage Currency ten cent coins would see its final appearance with two different reverse designs, each, rather plain.

Now, the fun begins. As previ-

ously noted, no supporting evidence of Koulz (the man) was ever found despite the exhaustive effort of many of my numismatic friends and my own efforts. There is no denying that the rare pattern coins attributed to Koulz do exist.

Reluctantly, we came to the conclusion that the name Koulz may have been a simple typographical error that originated in 1869 with the publication of *Suggestions to Congress of the Finances of the United States*.

We did find a large amount of information on Montchal Ruolz.

Montchal Ruolz was born in Paris in 1809 and died in Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1887. Note the similarity in the spelling of Koulz and Ruolz. It would be simple to transpose *uo* with *ou*, especially if a writer in English were translating the work of a Frenchman. Consider how easy it might have been for the author Moring or his stenographer to have heard the name Ruolz and mistaken it for Koulz.

Of the highest consideration is how H.E. Moring may have interpreted the name if it had been seen in old German script. In the old Gothic script the letter K (Ꝥ) looks very much like the letter R (Ꝛ). If Moring saw an *R* he might have thought he was looking at a *K*. Old German script was in common use in nineteenth century Germany, but was less common in America. A drop of water, for example, on the top of the *R* could blur the letter into looking like a *K*.

The lifespan of Montchal

Ruolz (1809 to 1887) is certainly consistent with the design and striking of a coin in 1869. Consider also that author H.E. Moring referred to Koulz as a German chemist in 1869. As you will see, Ruolz was a French chemist.

A French biography states that Ruolz was a scholar and savant who presented at the Opera-Comique in 1830 with F. Halevy.¹ From 1835 through 1839, Ruolz composed operas, cantatas, and melodies. Apparently, he was not all that successful as a composer as his brief career, prompted by a reversal of fortune, led him to study chemistry. It was in this field that the name Ruolz was made famous. Ruolz discovered the process for gilding and silver plating metals by the action of *pile voltaïque* in 1841. He gave the name "Procedure Ruolz" to these operations, through which he could apply with great ease silver or gold to an object by first dissolving silver or gold into cyanide of potassium. In 1855, while serving in the French Artillery, he discovered how to make steel and how to transform phosphorous metals. This French inventor, Henri-Catherine, Count of Ruolz, Montchal, composer and chemist, obtained as many as

seventeen patents in addition to his basic one of 1841. One of these additional patents, the twelfth, relates to the nickel plating of copper, brass, bronze and iron, using a nickel-chloride solution. Montchal Ruolz had studied electrolytic gilding and, on finding that process satisfactory, he generalized it by applying it to the electrodeposition of other metals, such as silver and platinum.

Before long, an unbelievably large number of trade names (some of which were the registered trademarks of the makers) had been coined for this alloy. It was not until the present century that these copper-nickel-zinc alloys came to be known as nickel-silver, but that designation has been included in this list for the sake of completeness.

A partial list of trade names for "nickel-silver" includes nickel oreide, Ruolz's alloy, and white metal.² A French patent (10,472) for what is referred to as "Ruolz's alloy" was granted in 1841.³ What is known as "Neusilber" (new silver) is referred to by many designations including "Ruolz's Alloy."⁴ "Ruolz" is defined in a glossary as "A gilded or silvered metal named after the inventor of the process who was a French chemist."⁵ Another

¹ F. B. Howard-White, *Nickel. An Historical Review* (Princeton, 1963), p.107

² Ibid. p. 273.

³ Ibid. p. 285; Ruolz, Montchal, H.-C. de. *Comptes Rend.*, 1841, 13, 998-1021.

⁴ E. Auer, S. Müller, and R. Slotta, *250 Jahre Nickel, Nickel als Münzmetall* (Buchum, 2001) p. 42.

⁵ "Treasures-in-Time," a glossary of Jewelry terms, is available on the Internet at www.treasures-in-time.com/glossary.htm

source confirms that the galvanic process was perfected in 1839 by the Frenchman Ruolz.⁶

An abandoned process for metal plating by the late seventeenth/early eighteenth century consisted in the placement of gold or money leaf on a support consisting of a plate of copper. This metal plate was replaced by the galvanoplastie. It is a process that consists of depositing the metal on a support and employs the use of electrolysis. The process was discovered in 1840 by Ruolz.⁷ Yet another source on the history of plating states that "in 1842 Ruolz succeeded in depositing metallic alloys from solutions of mixed salts."⁸

Other references to Ruolz continue to be found. The Web site of The Daguerreian Society notes that "instructions on electrotype copies of Daguerreotype pictures and Magneto electric and Galvanic gilding and silvering was according to the processes of Elkington [sic], Roulz [sic], and Fitzeau."⁹ *Scientific American* mentions that "in 1843, Bunsen, a German, invented a new electric battery, and two years afterward (1845), Elkampton [sic] and Ruolz discovered electro-metallurgy."¹⁰

Most compelling is a German Web site, "Schmucklexikon" (jewelry dictionary): "Argent Ruolz/Francais 37%

kuper, 25% nickel, 33% silber." (Dictionary definition of argent: archaic silver; figuratively, whiteness, silvery; white; shining.)¹¹

Apparently, no recognition from "Schmucklexikon" was given the name Koulz when defining "Ruolz's Alloy," which is not too dissimilar to the 41% copper, 33% nickel, and 26% silver composition, as suggested in H.E. Moring's publication. Recall also that coin 44 (Judd 716/Pollock 795) in *United States Pattern Postage Currency Coins*, when tested by electron microscopic analysis, was shown to contain 27.4% copper, 42.1 % nickel, and 30.4% silver. Other Koulz's Alloy coins have varying proportions of copper, nickel and silver. The actual coin design specified only "SIL., NIC., COP." No attempt to quantify the relative amounts of the metals was offered on the pattern coins.

Another possibility regarding *Suggestions to Congress of the Finances of the United States* is that New York chemist Krackowizer may have either descended from a person who lived in Krackow, Poland, or may be someone pulling our leg, perhaps a "Wizekracker."

We have an overwhelming amount of information published on a scientist, inventor, and chemist with a specializa-

⁶ A. Begun, *A Technical Dictionary of Printmaking*, found on the Internet at www.polyimetal.nl.

⁷ Found on the Internet, www.antiquaires-contact.com.

⁸ Found on the Internet, www.nbplating.com/early.

⁹ The Daguerreian Society found on the Internet at www.daguerre.org.

¹⁰ "Patent Office Reform," *Scientific American* n.s. 62/1 (1890), p 83.

¹¹ "Schmucklexikon," found on the Internet, www.beyars.com.

tion in metallurgy by the name of Montchal Ruolz. If one discounts the first mention of "Koulz's Alloy" in *Suggestions to Congress of the Finances of the United States* as well as subsequent references to the alloy based upon the erroneous first mention, we must conclude that the name Koulz was substituted for the name Ruolz. Later mention of "Koulz's Alloy" can be found in *United States Pattern Trial, and Experimental Pieces*

(1913 and 1940) by Adams and Woodin, *United States Pattern, Experimental and Trial Pieces* (1959, 1965, 1970, 1974, 1977 and 1982), by J. Hewitt Judd, *Scott's Comprehensive Catalogue and Encyclopedia of U.S. Coins* (1971), by Don Taxay, *United States Patterns and Related Issues* (1994), by Andrew W. Pollock III, and possibly others.

We have no other information on Koulz, not even a first name. Ruolz rules for me.

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Bibliomania through the Ages: Four Mini-Reviews by William Malkmus

F. Somner Merryweather, *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages. Being Sketches of Bookworms, Collectors, Bible Students, Scribes and Illuminators, from the Anglo-Saxon and Norman Periods, to the Introduction of Printing into England; with Anecdotes illustrating the History of the Monastic Libraries of Great Britain in the Olden Time* (1930 revision of 1849 edition by H. B. and Walter A. Copinger), 288 pp.

Holbrook Jackson, *The Anatomy of Bibliomania* (1950 single-volume edition; orig. publ. 1930), 668 pp.

Lawrence Clark Powell, *A Passion for Books* (1958), 252 pp.

Nicholas Basbanes, *A Gentle Madness. Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books* (1995), xvi, 638 pp.

These four books provide a fascinating overview of the structure and history of the affliction which we bear as our middle name. (The popularization of the word "bibliomania" is attributed to Thomas Frognall Dibdin (1776-1847), who used it as the one-word title for a book published in 1809; its prior use has been attested, at least as early as 1750, in a letter from Lord Chesterfield to his son, counseling him against that and other perils.)

Merryweather's book is a rather quaint effort, although probably less so than the original version, not reviewed here. The original (1849) text apparently was made more "politically correct" by the revisers, who explain that "Mr. Merryweather seems to have been a Protestant of the old school, and many of his denunciations are not, perhaps, in the best taste."

The author's preface describes his intent in writing the book, and concludes, "Reader; I have sketched my portraiture; if the expression be ungainly, let us part company at once." It appears this offer may have been taken up, if belatedly, by previous readers, since the copy which this reviewer was privileged to read had been uncut from page 137 on. The knowledge that this was the first time in seventy years that these particular pages had been scanned elicited a feeling of reverence, if not awe, and provided impetus to the project of reviewing this book in *The Asylum*.

The survey begins with the study of monastery libraries and of the monks and the parchments with which they worked prior to the introduction of the printing press. The study goes into great detail, including medieval anti-theft precautions,

a seemingly eternal problem (cf. Powell and Basbanes). Personalities from Adam, Abbot of Evesham to Wulstan, Archbishop of York are introduced, as well as locales ranging from Bury St. Edmonds to York Cathedral. The appearance of the printing press brings this work to its close.

Jackson, in *The Anatomy of Bibliomania*, tells us everything we wanted to know, and considerably more, about the nature of the disease, seeming to have overlooked no possible topic for discussion. The book is divided into thirty-two parts which are further subdivided into 199 sections. Among these section headings one may find quite practical ones such as "Reading at the Toilet" and "Reading Many Books at Once" and the saddest – "On Parting With Books" – as well as esoterica such as "Books Bound in Human Skin."

This latter section is perhaps not as gruesome as it might sound. Camille Flammarion, the French astronomer, received a bequest of the tanned skin from the back and shoulders of a countess whose skin he had once complimented; he used a portion to bind one of his books, *Ciel et Terre*. But at least one donor was able to enjoy his contribution in his lifetime: a Russian poet, who had a book of sonnets bound in his own skin, taken from a leg which was amputated following a hunting

accident.¹

Other sections, such as "A Glance at Their Anatomy," "Variety of Style and Materials," and "Of Size and Convenience" may cover territory more familiar to readers of *The Asylum*, while "Vain and Pedantic Reading Condemned" and "Whether to Read Quickly or Slowly" may help resolve some of the eternal dilemmas of bibliophiles.

From a half century ago, Powell, in his very subjective *A Passion for Books*, already laments the transformation of librarians into "documentalists" and libraries into "information centers" (not yet "media centers" or worse, in the current newspeak). We get the viewpoint of a very active book collector, aggressively seeking new acquisitions for "his" library. One of his stories (anticipating Basbanes) relates the capture of an almost successful thief attempting to make off with a prize exhibit, *The Bay Psalm Book*.

Powell's book consists of nineteen essays, written between 1948 and 1957. His narrative of having a Gutenberg Bible sitting on his desk evokes a feeling of immediacy and of "being there." This particular tale, unfortunately, lacks a true happy ending, at least in that his institution ultimately decided against the Gutenberg acquisition.

The author, noted for many works on the Southwest, and the founder of the University of

¹ For the do-it-yourselfers in our readership, optimal tanning instructions are provided.

Arizona Library School, died just last year at the age of 94. The reader will note that his use of the word "passion" in his book title is in no sense exaggerated.

The Basbanes text, *A Gentle Madness*, is by far the most colloquial and gripping production. The histories of many bibliophiles are narrated, frequently leaving the reader with a "what next?" urge to read far more than the planned quota before bedtime. The personalities are vividly brought to life, and, as in most areas of life, villains and scoundrels consort with the heroes and saints. The book, as noted in most reviews, opens with the story of Stephen Blumberg, who achieved fame by stealing perhaps as much as twenty million dollars' worth of books from libraries in almost every state in the Union (as well as a few Canadian provinces), apparently clinching the current Guinness world record.²

Basbanes interviews Blumberg and covers his trial. As a bit of preemptive advice to our readership, it must be noted that Blumberg did, in fact, try the "not guilty by reason of insanity" plea, although unsuccessfully. He, of course, did not have an official membership to back up his plea. (And, yes, he did have a numismatics shelf in his store-

house.) But, on to less overtly criminal characters.

It is difficult to imagine anyone reading the unresolved story about the meteoric appearance of Haven O'More in the 1970s and 1980s (apparently seeking the title of world's greatest book collector with millions of dollars in hand) without some sort of double-take such as "wha-a-at?" Information required for a full understanding of this situation (such as whose millions of dollars) was still being held under seal by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the case of *Davis v. O'More*, at the time of writing of the book. In the reviewer's follow-up file is a note to purchase any subsequent volume providing the resolution to this mystery.

Many more stories are related, most or all of which should be found enjoyable by *The Asylum* readership. For those on a limited budget of time or money, the Basbanes text is hereby most strongly recommended. But following the perusal of *A Gentle Madness*, the reader may be tempted into working backward through this list of titles. The reviewer offers his apologies in advance for not having been able to include Dibdin's 1809 *Bibliomania* in this present set of commentaries.

² The actual figure is, of course, difficult to pinpoint; estimates of the value of the purloined volumes range from a conservative five million dollars – a figure entered in his trial – to upwards of the twenty million dollar figure. However, the pallid runner-up to the title registered a mere three-quarters of a million.

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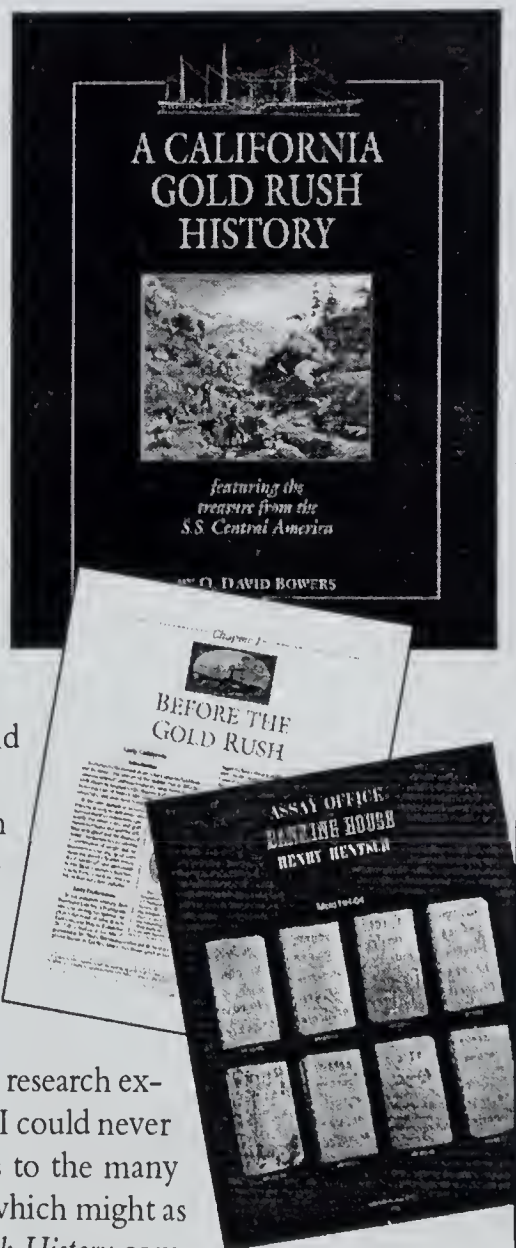
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I hope you will add a copy to your personal library. I believe it will be enjoyed by you for many years and will become a "treasure" in its own right. And, your complete satisfaction is guaranteed. If after you receive your copy you could send me a note, I would love to hear from you. In this book I feel that I am sharing part of my life!

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Q. David Bowers



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Imagine my surprise when I received a box from B&M that weighed about 600 pounds (it was at least that heavy by the time I carried it back to the office). And what did I find inside that box? You guessed it, your new book. "What kind of magic is this?" I thought, then remembered that a sufficiently developed technology is indistinguishable from magic.

So I am paging through this magnificent volume, finding treasure on each page. You have surpassed yourself, Dave! Congratulations and thank you for a book that will bring many hours of pleasure during the first read and a valuable reference volume for years to come. [R.F.]

Thanks very much for the new book, which has just arrived. I am only a few pages into it so far, but I did want to write to express my enthusiasm!

Since I hurt my knee last week, I can barely carry it since it is so heavy. It is impressive, and I have set a personal goal to read it from cover to cover. I do appreciate all the footnotes and other incidental information in addition to the main text. I can't imagine how much work it must have been to assemble all those detailed accounts into a coherent narrative that remains interesting.

Thanks, again. [M.F.]

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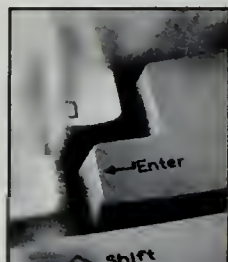
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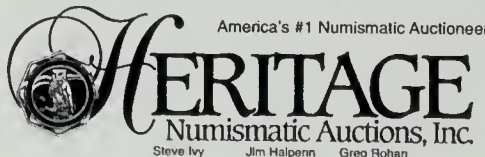
My Collection™ allows you to easily and confidentially create an electronic inventory of your collection, so you can instantly determine its value any time, night or day. The values in the **Heritage Value Index™** are updated daily, using realistic and current actual trading prices.



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